SPIRIT OF THE PRESS

SCIENCE IN 1860.

From the N. Y. Evening Post.

The year which has just ended will perhaps be remembered longest as that in which the first railroad was completed across this continent, and that in which the Suez Canal extended the Mediterranean Sea eastward to India; changes which, together with the new line of the Pacific Mail steamships from the Golden Gate to China, have practically shortened by one-half the average time required for a journey around the world. But there are other proofs of real progress in the world, which may one day be regarded as not inferior to these, although the noise they make at their coming is as nothing beside the acclamations with which Christendom has greeted the new pathways open to trade. These are found in the substantial additions which have been made to human knowledge in the domain of science; the advances by which the mind of man has pressed forward into what have always been unknown realms.

Chief among these are doubtless the achievements of the spectroscope, especially in the province of astronomical optics. It is but a few years since this instrument of research came into the hands of investigators; but it has already proved itself second in importance only to the telescope and the microscope, in extending our acquaintance with the laws of the universe. Indeed, we may say that any one of these three instruments alone, in the present state of science, would afford not a tithe of the resources which the combined battery of the three, assisting one another, places in the hands of aggressive intellects, laying siege to that "workshop of nature" which Goethe declared to "forever inaccessible.

There are some results of stereoscopic investigation, achieved during the last year, which pass beyond all the boldest anticipations even of its inventors. Perhaps the most brilliant of them is the method of determining the "proper motions" of the stars, even when they are in a right line to or from our sun. The spectrum formed by a prism, dispersing the rays of light, is the result of the law that these rays are refracted more or less, according to the length of the "waves" of which they consist. Now, if a star is moving away from us or towards us in space, a mathematician can calculate how much the waves of light are lengthened or shortened by a given rate of motion; and how much any given ray, located on the spectrum, for instance, by any of the dark lines of Fraunhofer, will be despatched thereby. It is found, in fact, that in a number of the fixed stars the dark lines which indicate the presence of the incandescent vapor of hydrogen or of iron are actually displaced, but always uniformly and in a degree which indieates by calculation the direction and rate of motion of the stars. To appreciate the importance of this discovery it must be remembered that, previously, it was supposed that no such motion could possibly be detected. unless by observations continued long enough to establish a progressive and regular gain or loss in brightness of each star observed; that is to say, continued for many thousands of years.

The very recent discovery also made by the

spectroscope of the identity of the aurora borealis with the zodiacal light, and of both with the corona surrounding the sun when totally eclipsed, is one which as yet, indeed, is a stumbling block to astronomers, but which seems to lead them to the very verge of some wonderful revelation. For it is always the most mysterious facts, the most unaccountable observations, that prepare the way for the greatest advances in knowlge. An exception to any law already known is sure to prove only an instance of some greater law waiting to disclose itself.

Indeed, the activity with which new facts concerning the solar system have been collected during the last year is itself one of the wonders of science. It is but a short time since the astronomy of our own system was regarded as complete in outline, and only to be filled up by painful and abstract researches, perfecting our knowledge of the several bodies in detail, which could have no interest for the general reader. But now the whole intelligent world is filled with the renown of inquiries into the structure of the sun, the past history of its sytem the storms in its atmosphere, the nature of its nebulous appendage, and even into the exact figures of its distance from the earth—a question, however, on which no important addition is expected to what is now known, until the next transit of Venus, December 8, 1874.

The other sciences have been no less active of late, although some of them have attained only results of less general interest. In chemistry there has been great progress made in improving the nomenclature, and in the methods of exact analysis. Many of its new practical applications, too, have been most promising; none more so than the improvements in the manufacture of iron and steel from the ore, and in obtaining illuminating gas. In zoology and paleontology there has been more zeal shown in Germany than here; and, although there have been no new works forming an era in these sciences, yet an era in the popular understanding and love of them has certainly been brought about in that country, where the people gather to-gether by thousands whenever such a man as Virchow or Haeckel or Vogt promises a scientific lecture on questions which, but a few years ago, were regarded as the exclusive concern of a few specially learned men.

The close of the year has been marked by making public the results of an expedition, sent out by the British Government, to explore, by dredging, the depths of the sea. This attempt has been far more successful than its projectors dared to hope; and has resulted in proving the existence of life in a great variety of forms at depths which were supposed to be demonstrably an utter waste. Eight, at least, of the forms found in great depths are species which were known as ter-tiary fossils, but were supposed to have been extinct for thousands of ages. We have recently had occasion to comment on the crucial importance of these results, in their bearing upon many unsettled questions of geology and zoology; but they are too recent to allow any judgment to be formed, as yet, of the influence they will ultimately have in modi-iying the doctrines of "geological time," or

those concerning the permanence of species.

One lesson will be learned from the triumphs of mind to which we have referred, as from cthers like them which have been achieved in the same time; that no problem which can be distinctly set before human science is to be despaired of. There is not within the reach of imagination an inquiry which concerns the laws of the visible world, that seems more hopeless to-day than some of those so recently and so satisfactorily solved; not though it ask the internal structure of our globe itself, or the laws of hereditary descent

MRS. STOWE'S BYRON BOOK. From the N. Y. Sun.

The publishers of Mrs. Stowe's new book have acted prudently in stimulating public curiosity about it to the highest possible pitch before its appearance. Many thousands of persons will purchase copies of it simply to find out what there is in it, who, if they were fully acquainted with its contents beforehand, would not deign to give it a passing look. A more pitiful contrast between promise and fulfilment has rarely been seen in the history

For some months now Mrs. Stowe has been loudly proclaiming that the volume she had in preparation would be such a complete and triumphant proof of the truth of the charge she made against Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh, in her article in the Atlantic Monthly, that there could be no further dispute on the subject. Upon the testimony adduced in the Atlantic the almost unanimous verdict of the public was that the charge was not proven; but on Mrs. Stowe's assurance that she had further and more conclusive evidence in reserve, there has been a general willingness to suspend final jndgment until that evidence could be weighed. Now that she publishes her book, whatever consideration may have been entertained for her will be swept away, and she herself be looked upon as a mere slanderer.

Condensed into a few words, all this amounts to the simple proposition that inasmuch as the charge against Lord Byron, published by Mrs. Stowe, was one of the thousand accusations in circulation against him during his lifetime, and was not positively disproved by him, though utterly discredited by his friends, therefore it must have been true! The reader may well ask in astonishment, as we did on getting to the end of the chapter, Is this all? Is there no direct testimony from any one acquainted with the facts; no positive proofs of the alleged criminal intimacy; no bringing home of the alleged offspring of the incestuous intrigue to Mrs. Leigh as its mother? Absolutely none whatever. From the beginning to the end of the volume, there is not a paragraph, not a line, not a word even, except Lady Byron's own statement, which presents any facts not perfeetly well known to the public long before Mrs. Stowe meddled in the matter. The whole book is simply a mass of inferences, all more or less destitute of probability, and all entirely inconclusive.

For instance, Mrs. Stowe asserts that Lord Byron must have been guilty of some unusual immorality because he failed to demand a judicial investigation of the quarrel between himself and Lady Byron. But the same argument would prove Lady Byron also guilty, for she, too, failed to demand a similar investigation when all England was ringing, as Mrs. Stowe shows, with accusations against her of unwifely and cruel conduct. It is said, too, that Lord Byron's bitter remorse and hatred of his wife prove his guiltiness. Guiltiness of what? Surely, a libertine, such as he is said to have been, would not have felt any especial regret or fear for one intrigue more or less. The fact that Mrs. Leigh was his half-sister would not have troubled him, since it did not, according to Mrs. Stowe, prevent him from seducing her. As to what Shelley says, it proves the reverse of guilt. He calls the friendship openly displayed by Lady Byron for Mrs. Leigh "a decisive contradiction" of the calumny. Mrs. Stowe's effort to explain away this manifestation of friendship, like her attempt to break the force of Lady Byron's letters, published in the Quarterly Review, is utterly futile. Even if it were occasioned, as she says, solely by a desire on Lady Byron's part to screen Mrs. Leigh from public censure, why should she be believed in her subsequent attempt to undo the effect of the artifice? But the proof that there was any artifice in this apparent friendship depends entirely upon proving, in the first instance, that there was something to be concealed by it, the presumption being that there was nothing, so that Mrs. Stowe's ingenious argument on this point falls to the

There is no necessity for analyzing the remainder of this weak and trashy production. It is called "Lady Byron Vindicated," but it should rather be called "A Failure to Vindicate Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe." Without reseon or motive, she put in circulation the nastiest piece of scandal that has been heard for years, and now, when called upon to prove it, she falls back upon the original fabrication of Lady Byron's mind, weakened by age and distorted by brooding upon her wrongs, as if a repetition of this fabrication were triumphant testimony to its intrinsic truth. She has achieved notoriety, it is true, but it is a notoriety of which no respectable woman should be proud.

THE FRENCH CABLE MONOPOLY.

From the N. Y. Times. The famous "cable" paragraph in President Grant's Message has at least found a responsive echo in the sympathies of our countrymen and countrywomen in Paris, however it may affect the Parisians in general, and outrage the sensibilities of the French authorities in particular.

It is clear that the illiberal policy of the French Government, so far as the Franco-American cable is concerned, is reacting not against the Government only, but against the company itself, whose stock is twenty-five per cent. below par, solely in consequence of trouble with the United States authorities, whereby its tenure upon American shores is made so uncertain. It is not impossible that this process of "bearing" is resorted to less in consequence of political vagaries in the brain of that "sound Confederate," Mr. Erlanger, than as a shrewd business device for getting hold of the stock at depressed rates, and before it shall bounce up again on the adjustment of difficulties by reasonable concessions. That these concessions must come, we hold to be beyond question. Our Government never will submit to the humiliation of seeing so unnatural and unjust a monopoly permanently established as the present arrangements confer, especially while it is publicly believed and claimed that Erlanger and Reuter, as our Paris correspondent says, "agreed, when the difficulty arose about landing the cable on our shores, to obtain from the French Government the annulment of the twenty years' exclusive privilege granted to that company." But how, on the contrary, are these accredited agents of the company, and how are the company themselves, going on? Our correspondent tells us that the French stockholders are arranging either for a fusion with the English Cable Company, or the maintenance of the present rate of messages. He tells us that on its thirteenth week of operation, the French cable yielded over eleven thousand dollars in gold, which, if the published ex-penses be correct, would make about eleven per cent, even then, on the actual first cost. He tells us, finally, that at the late meeting

in animals, or even a decision of the vexed question whether organic life exists in other worlds than this.

of the stockholders, the President declared that France would stand by its grant of twenty years' monopoly, and that Erlanger verified the assertion.

Now, as it is alleged that the company claims that it can lobby through Congress itself a confirmation of this monopoly, it is well for our people to keep a sharp look-out on the proceedings of this body. Everybody will remember how public indignation was stirred when, just before the new wire touched the sand at Duxbury, it was made known that the permission applied for by certain of our citizens to land an American cable on the French shore had been peremptorily refused. The prospect of a new submarine cable was grateful; the thought of connecting the Old World with the New by a wire, one of whose ends should touch our own soil, was a welcome thought, and stirred an emotion which even the Valentia and Heart's Content cable did not excite. But all this pleasure was instantly turned to indignation, and the outery of the people was unanimous, when the nature of the French concession was thus practically and

pungently made known. We repeat that it only remains for the French concessionnaires to disarm the storm in season, and for the French Government to repair its errors. The arrangement effected hitherto for non-reciprocity in privilege is opposed to the spirit of modern commerce by barring out competition. There was not for it even the excuse of a new experiment, deserving patent or exclusive rights, since the cable from Ireland to Newfoundland had already been successfully laid, and thereafter success for similar enterprises was assured. Until this proper modification is made, new enterprises like the Belgo-American cable will start with the popular sentiment in their favor, and the fate of the French cable will remain uncertain.

THE DRUNKARDS' CARNIVAL.

From the N. Y. Tribune. It is the general testimony of our city press that the Christmas holidays were this year distinguished by extraordinary and excessive drinking. "New York was drunk yesterday" is the rather strong expression of one of them with reference to New Year's; but that the drinking of that day was general and immoderate, even for New York, is the concurrent

Drinking was once all but universal; now it is not. There is a very considerable minority, even in this metropolis of sensuality, who systematically and on principle reject every intoxicating beverage. These are a hundred times more numerous than they were fifty years ago. But, apart from the rigidly abstinent, it is our conviction that there was more drinking and deeper drinking here in the year 1869 than in any of the 260 preceding years since Hendrick Hudson discovered this island.

The fearful consequences can here only be glanced at. Destitution, squalor, vice, pro-fligacy, robbery, murder—these are more prevalent in New York to-day than at any former period. Beggary and harlotry, crime and infamy, crowd our streets; finding in the grogshop their source and their inspiration. Very rarely is a novice drawn into a gaming-house or a den of debauchery except when under the influence of liquor. It is our firm conviction that, if alcoholic beverages could be wholly and permanently banished from our city, and all our police and machinery of criminal justice went with them, there would thenceforth be less crime and far less misery in our city than there is.

There is a very considerable body of respectable citizens who cannot shut their eyes to these horrors, yet who are not converts to total abstinence. They drink rarely and cautiously-at least, they think so-are in no danger of falling into drunkenness, and do not feel constrained to give up what they deem an innocent and pleasurable exhilaration because others abuse liquor to their own hurt and that of their families. They are not convinced that our way of figliting what they admit to be a great evil is the right way. We do not propose at this time to discuss our more palpable difference, but to ask them whether they ought not to resist intemperance in some way. Grant that our way is wrong, how does that excuse your seeming apathy, your practical indifference? Here are tens of thousands annually swept on to ruin by the use of strong drink: how does our error, if it be an error, excuse your heedlessness? Admit that, with your convictions, you cannot act with us who stand for total abstinence, does that excuse you from acting at all.

In Massachusetts and other States where prohibition has been strongly advocated, these moderates profess to favor a stringent Excise law, which they say would do more for temperance than prohibition can, because it can be enforced, while prohibition cannot be. Yet in this State, where no serious effort for prohibition has been put forth for years, the moderates raise no voice in favor of our mild and liberal Excise law, but generally help elect legislators pledged to abolish all excise laws or render them inoperative. The Sunday Mercury demands, as one result of our late Democratic triumph, that the sale of liquor shall be made as free here as that of sugar, beside having Sunday given over to it, as it is not to the sale of sugar; and this seems to be in accord with the spirit now dominant, and certainly to prevail in fact if not in law.

Men of convictions and of moral principles, who are not total abstainers! what is your way of repressing excess in drinking? Let your acts answer!

THE BOSTON BLUE-STOCKINGS. From the N. Y. World. The literate ladies of Boston have a club. They assemble therein and read each other their respective poems. Sometimes Emerson comes and lectures to them. Once a month they venture upon the extravagance of a teaparty, to which unanointed outsiders are sometimes invited. On these occasions Pallas lays aside her helm and Minerva her scroll, and for the hour they become bewildering and enchanting mortals, with a correct taste in souchong and a lively sense of a joke. It is a Boston patent of nobility to be summoned to one of these suppers of the god-desses, and if the club chose to confer decorations they would be as ambitiously sought for as are the insignia of the Order of the Black Eagle or the Golden Fleece. Supper at the Hotel de Rambouillet was something to remember; but the finical and shallow fops and fribbles of that famous resort were no more like the stately and august assemblage of tall, wise women and "men with learning pale who assembled in the little dingy hovse in Tremont place than a cluster of tiger moths are like a bevy of birds of paradise. A journalistic enthusiast has been admitted to this sacred and secluded areanum, and he tells the world some of its secrets. Mrs. Howe radiates bon mots; Emerson jokes; Sewall bubbles; the conversation, when not humorous, is "soulful." The bylaws do not prohibit knitting, and an occasional Penelope briskly plies her needles; at intervals the ladies take refuge from philogeners in characteristics. sophy in charades; nor do they disdain tableaux. Unlike the members of the Sorosis, they seem to care little about eating and

, drinking or the splendor of their environments. They doubtless think that the mens divinior is one thing and the otium cum dignitate another. If they can approve their claim to the first, it is likely that they will surrender the latter to their New York sisters without a pang. And they will presently have an op-portunity of vindicating the said claims, for they are going to publish a newspaper. It will probably be less screaming and vehement in tone than the Recolution, but it is safe to predict that its literary character will be as high as the common law of Massachusetts will permit. Mrs. Howe will supply its intellectual radiance and its bland atmosphere of scholarship; Garrison will darken and agitate the same with casual thunderbolts of gratuitous fanaticism; Higginson will reason from the wrong premise to the wrong conclusion, and with much copiousness confuse the counsels of the wise; and Miss Lucy Eton, of whom we have not hitherto been aware, but who is of the editorial quartette, will do something or another, and upon this simple testimony of her name -musical as the murmur of hautboys or the rustle of leaves-we venture to assume that she will do it with grace and grammar, and that neither her argumentation nor her rheto. ricol usages shall bring tears to the eyelashes of the elect. The Revolution will have to burnish its armor anew if it wishes to keep its place in the reformatory field. The panoply of its competitor is far more shining and its wespons keener than the rather rusty ones so savagely wielded by the pioneer paper. We await the issue of the Woman's Journal with interest, and, if it has anything new or clever to say, we shall give it candid attention and, perhaps, occasionally communicate it to the universe—unless, indeed, its publications are meant to be confidential, which point the editorial salutatory will probably clear up for us.

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